2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

584 agrees, they accept the liquor brought and drink it together. If the parents are unwilling, but the girl desires the match, it is said that they usually have to give in to her.

Here too they offer liquor on leaves to the Departed inside the house and watch the leaves to see whether the omens are favourable or not.

At the next visit, the boy's parents bring four baskets of rice and more liquor. The boy's mother washes the girl's feet with liquor and offers a ring. In some villages they drop liquor in the rice-husking cavity; in others they make an offering of cowries or their equivalent to the Pot of the Departed. As they do so, the boy's father says, 'O Departed, accept this offering. We take this girl into our clan and give you cowries in her stead'. At Esalnar the people said that in the old days the Duga sept used to give five cowries, and now give fifteen pice, and the Sori sept used to give three cowries and now nine pice.[1] These are put into the Pot of the Departed. From this day the girl is regarded as belonging to the clan of her betrothed, and must obey its rules and taboos. In some places it is considered proper that a girl should go, even before marriage, for New Eating ceremonies to her future husband's house.

At Chimri I was told that as the boy's parents go home, the motiari stop them and demand 'ring-cowrie', a small present of rings or cowries to compensate the ghotul for the loss that it will suffer when the girl is married. In other places, this is done during the marriage ceremony.

[301]

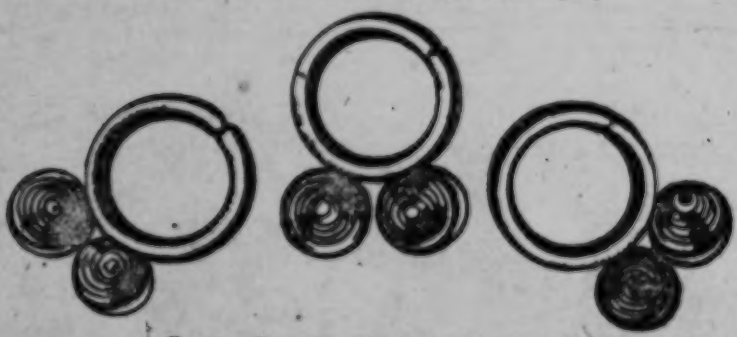

FIG. 17. Brass rings with small bells attached
Actual size

At this second visit, the bride-price is fixed. If the engagement is made many years before marriage the boy's parents generally pay an annual visit to the girl's house, taking her presents of liquor and ornaments.

[801] The bride-price should be in terms of odd numbers, three, five, seven or eleven. Even numbers are *jori ki jori* and so unlucky: you must have something over a pair. The number nine is also unlucky: a man may die of it.

There are many games about this betrothal ceremony and it is often mentioned in the songs; during their slow tedious dance round the marriage-booth the chelik sing a mixed Gondi and Halbi song about it.

[1] The Muria clans do not now appear to worship different numbers of gods, but the above practice suggests that perhaps they once did. Ward says that the Gond marriage contract was generally to the effect 'that the father of the bridegroom elect should give the father of the bride as many rupees as he worships Devs (the latter never exceed nine in number, but vary from that number to five)'.—H. C. E. Ward, *Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Mandlai District* (Bombay, 1870), p. 136.